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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [XF](#) [EUN](#)  
SUBJECT: EU CONSIDERS OPTIONS FOR ENGAGING IN IRAQ

Classified By: Alyce Tidball, Deputy Minister Counselor for  
Political Affairs, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: European Union Council, Commission and Parliament officials told NEA DAS for Iraq Lawrence Butler, during meetings in Brussels on February 27 and 29, that the EU is actively exploring options for engaging in Iraq. Council officials confirmed EU HiRep Solana's interest in visiting Iraq. Commission officials, who subsequently visited Baghdad March 2-4, confirmed renewed EU interest in assisting international efforts in capacity- and institution-building in Iraq. Members of the European Parliament Ana Gomes and Baroness Nicholson, in separate meetings, briefed on the European Parliament's recently adopted report on the EU's role in Iraq, noting the need to leave the past behind and concentrate on the future of Iraq. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) DAS Butler briefed EU Council Political Director Robert Cooper on the current situation in Iraq and urged the EU to continually reiterate to Syria the need to stop the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq through better control of borders. He urged the EU to encourage Arab countries to establish diplomatic representation in Iraq. Iraq desk officer Sophie Kisling said this issue is always on the list of topics for meetings with Arab states. Cooper asked about the struggle for power among the Shia in Basra. Butler explained this is a political-criminal turf battle among the Shia, many of whom still envisage setting up a nine-province region of their own. Maliki, however, wants a strong center, as do the Sunni. Cooper asked if Kirkuk is off the agenda. Butler said UN Rep DiMistura is doing a good job and that life is gradually improving in Kirkuk. The Iraqi economy is growing and the security situation is improving. Cooper confirmed that EU HiRep Solana is thinking of going, but said Afghanistan will outrank Iraq for upcoming trips.

¶3. (C/NF) On Afghanistan, Cooper noted that Cyprus is a great nuisance and suggested it is time the U.S. do something about it - after the cold war and apartheid we could certainly take on this problem, he said. Political Minister Counselor Wohlers said there is serious concern about Cyprus and the spoiler role it has played on Afghanistan and Kosovo. Cooper said the EU had pushed Turkey as far as possible, but there was nothing to be gained from pushing further now. We should, he said, focus on Cyprus and insist they have a ceasefire on institutional problems with the Turks.

¶4. (C) Patrice Bergamini, Deputy Chief of Staff to EU HiRep Javier Solana, told DAS Butler in a separate meeting that Solana wants to go to Iraq to show EU support. He said a consensus is growing in Europe on the need to engage. Bergamini was very concerned about Syria's attitude that it is "winning" and said we must break that attitude. He hoped that with the help of the UK and France they would be able to actually get authority at the General Affairs and External Affairs Council (GAERC) to implement the mandate given to

Solana last year to be the sole EU representative to Damascus. He said the election in Cyprus offered a great opportunity for the U.S. to push for a resolution of EU-NATO relations.

15. (C) Belen Martinez Carbonell, Middle East advisor on Commissioner Benita Ferrero Waldner's staff, confirmed that Iraq is currently very much on the EU's radar screens, because of a European Parliament effort to focus attention on expenses. Carbonell said they worked tirelessly for the last three months to provide the necessary explanations and were finally able to satisfy the demands of the parliament. Middle East Director Tomas Dupla del Moral and his team would leave for Iraq on March 2 to get a sense of what the EU can do directly in Iraq, rather than working through other funding institutions. Meanwhile, she said, negotiations on a trade agreement with Iraq have a ways to go. One problem is the constant turnover in the Iraqi administration. Negotiating the agreement is first a pedagogic exercise in explaining how to negotiate and explaining what they would be committing to do. Commissioner for Development Louis Michel had been planning to go to Iraq on February 28, but it turned out the people he was planning to meet were not going to be there so he canceled his trip.

16. (C) Members of the European Parliament Ana Gomes and Baroness Emma Nicholson met separately with DAS Butler to discuss their report on Iraq and proposal for a European Parliament recommendation to the Council on the European Union's role in Iraq. Gomes who drafted the report, said she wanted to leave the past behind and concentrate on the future. She described the Parliament's delegation for Iraq, which has 13 MEPs from different parties along with Iraqi members. The delegation is chaired by Baroness Nicholson and held its first meeting on 28 February. The report took a critical approach regarding European Commission efforts in Iraq because of the lack of accountability for funds, but the Commission was able to provide information that helped resolve EP questions. Gomes said the Parliamentary delegation will visit Iraq at the end of April to see how they might be of assistance. Baroness Nicholson, who was recently named by PM Maliki as an honorary health advisor to Iraq, briefed DAS Butler on the problems faced by the marsh Arabs, many of whom have returned to their homes, are beginning to sustain themselves, but are not yet able to start trading again.

17. (U) DAS Butler cleared this message.

Murray

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